2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

764 sees nothing tragic, and is meant to meet social demands as much as metaphysical fears. The ceremonial surrounding death differs somewhat in different communities; mostly, these variations are of [184] a minor character (concerning, for example, the precise duties of the grave-diggers), and can be ignored.

The full funeral ceremonial includes a whole series of rituals, beginning with the burial, called *mba*, and spun out over three funerary rites, performed after eight days, forty days, and one hundred and twenty days, and called after these time intervals. Poor [184] families may be unable to perform the last rite, which is altogether absent in the riverain area and in a few pagan inland villages. Several informants maintained that the Hundred-twenty Days' rite was an innovation, though long since established in many parts of the country (both among pagans and Mohammedans), and that it had come to Nupe with Islam. This last assumption is without foundation since the Mohammedan funeral customs include no such observance. Yet it does seem likely from the present distribution of the ritual that it originated in the Mohammedan capital and then spread to the pagan villages. The villagers, of course, show in a great many ways their readiness to imitate the 'superior' way of life in the town; and there need have been no stronger reason for an innovation otherwise congenial to the traditional outlook. But in the town the addition of another funerary feast fits more specifically into the social conditions.

764 To some extent it merely reflects the greater preoccupation, in the town, with occasions for the display of wealth and status. But ● 587 there seems to be this also. When discussing the final funerary rite the Nupe always stress that it is 'important for the women' or concerns 'the women especially'; as we shall see, it does in fact bear specifically on the end of widowhood and on the parentage of posthumous children. In the villages which do not perform this rite, these questions are settled, three months after the death, in an informal family council. The last funerary rite thus ceremonializes the same occasion as well as postpones it. Now, this occasion is much more important, the issue being more uncertain, among the townspeople than among the peasants in the villages. Only in the town, among the aristocracy and the wealthier classes, does large-scale polygyny occur, so that the re-marriage of widows becomes a complicated matter; equally, levirate and marriage of the mother's brother's widow which, in the villages, greatly simplify the problem, are disappearing among the Mohammedans of the town. The postponement of the decision by another month would thus seem to be a useful expedient; while the added ceremonial lends moral weight to an occasion grown more critical.

764 The number as well as the scale of the funerary rites vary with